

Toronto 1977

report on skid row



CITY OF TORONTO PLANNING BOARD
RESEARCH AND OVERALL PLANNING DIVISION NOVEMBER 1977

COMMISSIONER OF PLANNING
CITY OF TORONTO PLANNING BOARD



DENNIS A. BARKER Commissioner of Planning

REPORT



TO Committee on Neighbourhoods, Housing,
Fire and Legislation

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Subject: Skid Row: Population and Housing

Origin: Commissioner of Planning (c7lnhf177030:44)

Comments:

1. BACKGROUND

This report arises from a request embodied in Report No. 25 of the Committee on Neighbourhoods, Housing, Fire and Legislation, adopted by City Council on November 9th, 10th and 12th, 1976, that the Commissioner of Planning, in consultation with the Commissioner of Housing, the various skid row agencies, the Commissioner of Development, the Metropolitan Commissioner of Social Services, and other appropriate agencies, report on:

- "a) the projected size of the population requiring permanent accommodation in a skid row context over the next several years; and
- b) the number of units of housing to be required by this population over the next several years in relation to the amount of housing projected to be available for this population."

2. INTRODUCTION

This report presents an overview of a complex social, physical, economic and geographical phenomenon -- Toronto's skid row. The nature of skid row is described in terms of the characteristics of its population; its functional and geographical structure; and, those factors and trends identified as affecting its future. Particular attention is paid to the various types and availability of skid row accommodation.

Because of the complexity of the phenomenon, it was not possible to conduct a detailed census of the skid row population. However, on the basis of information obtained in discussion with City and Metro officials, workers in skid row agencies and social researchers, as well as field observations, estimates are provided as to the population's present size.

Although adequate housing for this population is of primary concern, the problems associated with skid row are many faceted. Therefore, the policy directions proposed incorporate the provision of health and employment services in addition to housing. The main policy thrust is towards the creation of a comprehensive preventive and remedial approach to skid row.

3. THE NATURE OF SKID ROW

3.1 The Characteristics of the Skid Row Population

Although a common stereotype of a skid row habitue is that of a "drunken bum" who will not work, the skid row population is, in fact, very diverse although almost exclusively male.

Five characteristics have been used by social researchers to describe the skid row individual:

- a) his residence in a deteriorated mixed commercial-residential area, located in older sections of the city, which have the facilities and services to maintain a low income male community;
- b) his frequent change of residence;
- c) the degree of his participation in public drunkenness behaviour as well as his participation in skid row institutions;
- d) his lack of family ties; and
- e) the low income he receives and/or low rent he pays.

Because these characteristics do not represent discrete entities but rather a range of behaviour and circumstances, a simple definition of a skid row individual is not appropriate. However, it is possible to give some idea of the diversity among men who fit into the broad category of "skid rower". At one extreme are the men who live in the traditional skid row area, have frequent contact with the police as a consequence of being drunk in public, use soup kitchens and similar services and have no fixed residence - rather staying over night in hostels and flophouses, or sleeping outdoors in a variety of places around the City.

On the other hand, there are those who are not as visible and may be more accurately described as "marginal" or "potential" skid rowers. These men may live in relatively stable circumstances off the main skid row. While they may have minimal contact with the

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police or social welfare agencies, they manifest two key components of a skid row identity: poverty and lack of family or personal ties. However, these two factors emphasize the relative precariousness of their situations. In times of stress caused by personal or economic problems, they could very well fall into the mainstream skid row population.

3.2 The Functional and Geographical Nature of Skid Row

From a functional and geographical perspective, skid row may be described as an area which provides a number of essential services for a predominantly single, male, low income population. Persons gravitate to skid row because:

- a) it provides the City's lowest rents for the most basic type of accommodation;
- b) of the many private and public social welfare agencies, organized to accommodate these individuals;
- c) of the variety of establishments, such as inexpensive restaurants, clothing stores, wine stores, and temporary employment agencies;
- d) there is a relatively higher level of tolerance afforded by the community for behaviour society generally considers abnormal or anti-social; and
- e) there exists the possibility of companionship with persons in similar circumstances or, alternatively, the anonymity many desire.

Toronto's traditional skid row, centred on "The Corners" -- Jarvis and Dundas -- encompasses the area bounded roughly by Queen, Yonge, Carlton and River Streets. This area will be referred to, in this report, as the Eastern Downtown Area. It has always been heterogeneous in terms of the characteristics of its population and its functional aspects. In fact, this diversity has made it unique among skid rows which, in other North American cities, are generally concentrated within a few downtown blocks. Furthermore, Toronto's skid row is somewhat dispersed within the City -- discernible nodes exist in such areas as Queen/Spadina, College/Spadina, Queen/Broadview, South Parkdale and the Junction. However, the primary skid row area, in terms of population characteristics and functions, is the Eastern Downtown Area.

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4. TRENDS AFFECTING SKID ROW

A number of trends, operating at different levels, have impacts on the future structure, function and size of skid row. At the national level, economic, social and political conditions affect employment opportunities, perceptions of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour, and availability of funds for social welfare programmes. At the municipal level, the evolution of the physical and social structure of the community affects the availability, cost and type of housing as well as the number, quality and type of services provided.

Changes within the skid row population must also be considered. At both the individual and group levels, drinking behaviour, for example, may change over time. Also, aging increases the prevalence of chronic disabilities which results in a change in the kind and amount of services required.

4.1 Demographic Factors

One of the most important trends is related to the demographic structure of the population. A large proportion of the current skid row population is a legacy of two major social upheavals: World War II and the migration of Maritimers to Toronto in the 1950's (1). While the vast majority of veterans and migrants disappeared into the mainstream of urban society, many men were unable to make the transition because of personal, economic and/or social factors. Today, as a consequence, we are experiencing an increase in the number of elderly "hard-core" skid row men. While many of the men are under 60, they bear the emotional and physical scars of a life of heavy drinking, poor nutrition, and homeless wandering and, as a result, are subject to chronic complaints. In addition, they are increasingly becoming targets for "muggers". For those still able to work, competition is intense for the few casual jobs available.

Housing, in particular, presents problems for these men. Even those receiving pensions (Old Age Security and Department of Veterans' Affairs) or disability allowances experience difficulties in obtaining appropriate accommodation. Their unconventional lifestyle makes them undesirable tenants for much of the available rooming accommodation as well as for senior citizen and subsidized housing. While loneliness attracts some to such facilities as Seaton House, others are repelled by its institutional aspects. As a result, many of these older men are living in a variety of what have generally been considered to be temporary accommodation, i.e. missions, hostels and flophouses.

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On the other hand, all skid row agencies have noted an increase in the number of men aged 35 and under who are using their services. This can, no doubt, be attributed to the high unemployment rate which, in addition to affecting the local labour force, is attracting young unskilled men to the City. However, the most disturbing aspect of this new development is that it suggests the persistence of the process by which the next generation of skid row men are being enculturated into a hopeless and self-destructive lifestyle.

4.2 Neighbourhood Changes

Another trend involves the dramatic physical and social changes the traditional skid row area is now undergoing. Because the City's skid row areas have been situated in working class and immigrant reception neighbourhoods, the residents have, in the past, appeared to be more accepting of many types of unconventional behaviour. In addition, these communities have supported many of the same functions used by skid rowers; for example, inexpensive boarding houses, second-hand stores, and so forth.

Today, because the inner city has become an attractive and desirable residential area for the young and affluent middle-class, extensive renovation of houses has occurred. As a result, the availability of low cost housing in Don Vale and Cabbagetown has decreased. This, along with the establishment of restaurants or specialty stores catering to these new residents, has resulted in a shrinkage of the geographic area of skid row and a decline in the extent of services provided by the private sector for the skid row population.

As a result of these physical and social trends in the character of skid row neighbourhoods there have been commensurate changes in local attitudes. For example, the new residents appear to be generally less tolerant of such visible skid row characteristics as public drunkenness, and of the presence of flophouses. Thus, there has been an increase in the number of appeals to government and various social agencies to increase and improve treatment and social assistance for the skid row population. Along with this call for greater institutionalization of these men, the police are being asked to enforce more actively, stringent control measures.

4.3 Economic and Social Factors

A variety of broad economic and social factors are also finding physical expression on skid row. For instance, the increase in the number, coverage and resources of various social welfare

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programmes over the last decade has resulted in a greater availability of money and services for the skid row individual. These, together with the other traditional sources of support -- panhandling, casual labour and church charities -- might have been expected to have substantially eliminated skid row conditions. However, the problem persists. One explanation is that, since it is largely a behavioural problem, physical resources may not, in themselves, provide a solution. Furthermore, existing programmes have often tended to encourage dependency rather than self-sufficiency.

Changing treatment methods for the mentally ill are also having repercussions on skid row. The proliferation of out-patient treatment programs, run by the Queen Street Mental Health Clinic has, over the past few years, been encouraging patients to remain in the community. Although this approach may be helpful to many, workers in skid row institutions have noted an increase in the number of persons with serious behavioural problems among their clients. Because these persons are often unable to cope with every-day living and their behaviour is only tolerated in the skid row environment, there is the danger of their developing a dependence on hostel accommodation and other skid row services.

Because alcoholism and drinking in general constitute an important component of the skid row life style, society's attitude towards this problem has a direct impact on skid row conditions. Significantly, over the past few years, there has been a movement to treat public inebriates as men suffering from the disease of alcoholism and thereby requiring treatment, rather than as criminals requiring punishment. In response to this change in perspective, The Liquor Control Act was amended in 1971 so that police were empowered to take men arrested for being drunk in a public place to newly established detoxication centres rather than bringing them to court. This change in legislation was designed to end the cycle of intoxication, arrest and jail and subsequent intoxication for homeless alcoholics and drunks by providing facilities for their detoxication and rehabilitation.

In practice, however, several unanticipated and negative effects of this public health approach have surfaced. First, rather than providing a gateway to long-term treatment and rehabilitation programmes, the detox system mainly supplies a "drying-out" service. Second, and as a direct result of this, there appears to be a deterioration in the physical health of the chronic public inebriate. Without periodic jail terms with their enforced abstinence, basic medical care, shelter and nutrition, these men have more time to drink and fewer interruptions of drinking spree (2).

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5. ESTIMATES OF THE SIZE OF THE SKID ROW POPULATION

Although the general characteristics of the skid row individual have been described above, it is apparent that they are not readily operationalized so as to enable a detailed census of this population to be undertaken even if the resources for such a census were available. As a consequence, an estimate must be made based on a variety of surrogate measures, qualitative information and intuitive feelings derived from first hand observations of the skid row scene.

Working within these constraints, an estimate of the present skid row population in the City of Toronto (disaffiliated, homeless or single displaced persons are terms often used in referring to this group) places the number between 8 and 10 thousand persons. Approximately half (4 to 5 thousand) manifest those characteristics and behaviour patterns most widely recognized as indicative of a skid row lifestyle. Of this group, the majority are residents of the Eastern Downtown Area while the others live near secondary skid row areas. The distribution of the marginal skid rower - those making up the remainder of the total population - are similarly distributed between the traditional Eastern Downtown Area skid row area and the smaller nodes in other parts of the City.

On the basis of bed-head counts for the night of May 6, 1977, a detailed breakdown by accommodation type, for a portion of the skid row population, was obtained (see Table 1). Hostels, flophouses, and institutions dealing with chronic public inebriates were surveyed. While these figures provide us with some idea of the extent of the problems, they do not include those men living in rooms -- possibly the largest segment of the skid row population. As a result, they primarily represent men who fit into a more extreme category; that is, men who live on skid row, are highly mobile and show a high level of contact with the police and skid row agencies. Also, the emphasis on the chronic public inebriate in this tabulation tends to support the impression of the homeless man as an alcoholic. In fact, the figures collected by Howe and Hoichberg (3) in Toronto support Bogue's (4) conclusion that only about a third of the single displaced person population consume excess alcohol. Taking these facts into consideration, the estimate of eight to ten thousand skid row individuals is probably quite conservative.

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TABLE 1: APPROXIMATE BED/HEAD COUNTS - NIGHT OF MAY 6, 1977

Type of Accommodation	Degree of Permanence		Total
	Permanent & Semi-Permanent*	Temporary	
Hostels			
Fred Victor Mission	65	120	180
Good Shepherd Refuge		3**	3
Salvation Army			
Men's Hostel	100	300	400
Toronto Men's Hostel/ Seaton House	180	125	305
TOTAL	345	548	893
Flophouses	150	100	250
Other Institutions (public inebriates)			
Treatment Facilities		150	150
General Medical Facilities		70	70
Residences, Half-Way Houses		60	60
Detox Centres		50	50
Police Lock-Ups		50	50
Other Jails		50	50
TOTAL		430	430
Illegitimate (parks, hallways, etc.)		200	200
GRAND TOTAL	495	1,278	1,773

- * Refers primarily to senior citizen accommodation
** Undergoing renovations

SOURCES: City of Toronto Planning Board &
Addiction Research Foundation

6. SKID ROW ACCOMMODATION

It must be remembered that the term "skid row housing" is imprecise. In many cases, we are dealing with the "sleeping arrangements" of men rather than their lodgings or living premises. The range of accommodation varies from park benches, abandoned cars, jail, detox centres, hostels, flophouses, rooming houses, half-way houses to flats and apartments. It can, however, be broadly categorized in terms of its location, the permanence of its occupants, and whether it is operated by institutions. Because poverty is a basic skid row component, its quality, even if it meets the minimum health and building code standards, will likely be poor.

Location of residence and residential mobility are largely relative characteristics. Because Toronto's skid row areas are neither well defined nor homogeneous, it can often be debated whether a particular lodging is within or outside the geographical boundaries of skid row. The hostels, however, are clearly located near the centre of the area as are most other institutional accommodations -- both temporary and permanent. Flophouses, too, are all located in the Eastern Downtown Area skid row. On the other hand, rooming houses are much more widely dispersed throughout the City but those which provide accommodation to skid rowers are primarily to be found in those areas of the City which are undergoing redevelopment.

Lodging type, be it institutional or not, is not a reliable indicator of the transiency of the tenant. Some flophouse residents, for example, have been living in one house for a number of years whereas rooming house tenants often move every few weeks. One interesting observation is that, although high levels of residential mobility are quite common, moves are most often within the neighbourhood. Therefore, the skid row population tends to be quite stable in terms of neighbourhood attachment.

The most important types of accommodation for skid row individuals are hostels, flophouses and rooming houses.

6.1 Hostels

The hostels provide temporary, semi-permanent and, in some cases, permanent accommodation, meals and other forms of assistance to the City's skid row population. Toronto Men's Hostel/Seaton House is operated directly by Metro's Department of Social Services, while the Salvation Army's Men's Hostel, Fred Victor Mission and Good Shepherd Refuge are operated by Church organizations with government subsidies.

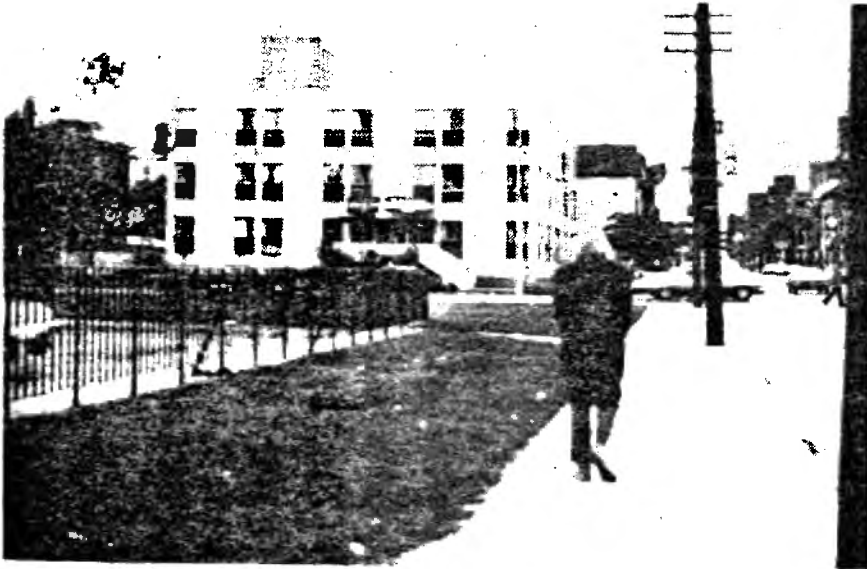
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The men who stay at these hostels can be broadly categorized as:

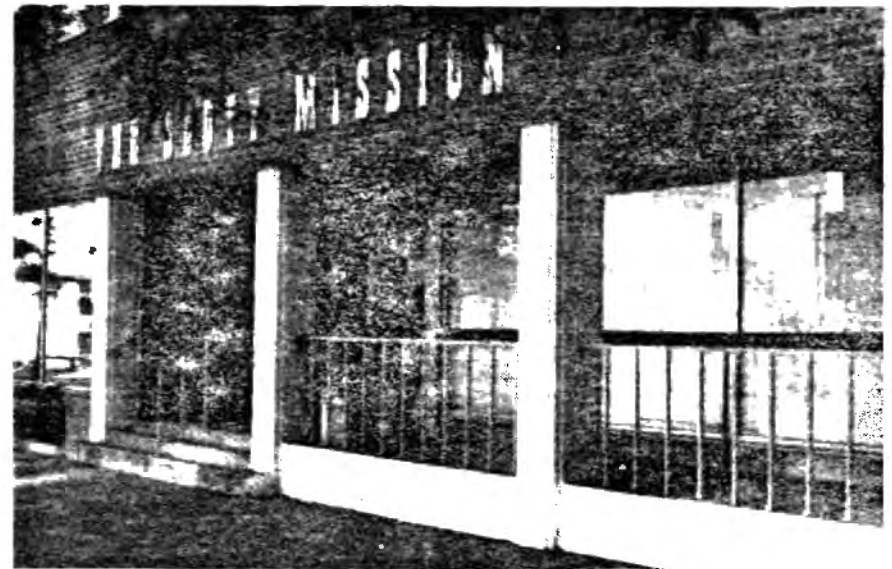
- a) The hard-core transients -- men who constantly move across the country either looking for work or living by their wits. These "hobos" or "tramps" represent a very small proportion of the skid row and hostel population.
- b) Those in need of short-term emergency accommodation -- men who, because of domestic or other disputes, require shelter for a night or two.
- c) The unemployed -- generally unskilled men who have not been able to find employment for a long time. Often dependent on casual labour, the hostel provides emergency accommodation when their resources are depleted. Included in this group are new migrants to the City who lack social and financial resources.
- d) The unemployables -- men with emotional, physical and/or drinking problems which make them unable to work. Although many receive welfare or disability premiums, their erratic behaviour and inability to manage their resources cause them to "fall-back" on the hostels when they find themselves broke and "on-the-street".
- e) The elderly -- many of the "hard-core" old time skid row inhabitants are housed in the hostels on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. These include the burnt-out alcoholics and others in poor health. In many cases, they prefer the familiar environment of the hostel.

These hostels, as Table 2 indicates, provide a total of about 1,000 beds. Over the 1976/77 winter, they all operated near total capacity. However, there were sufficient facilities to meet the demand for this type of shelter.

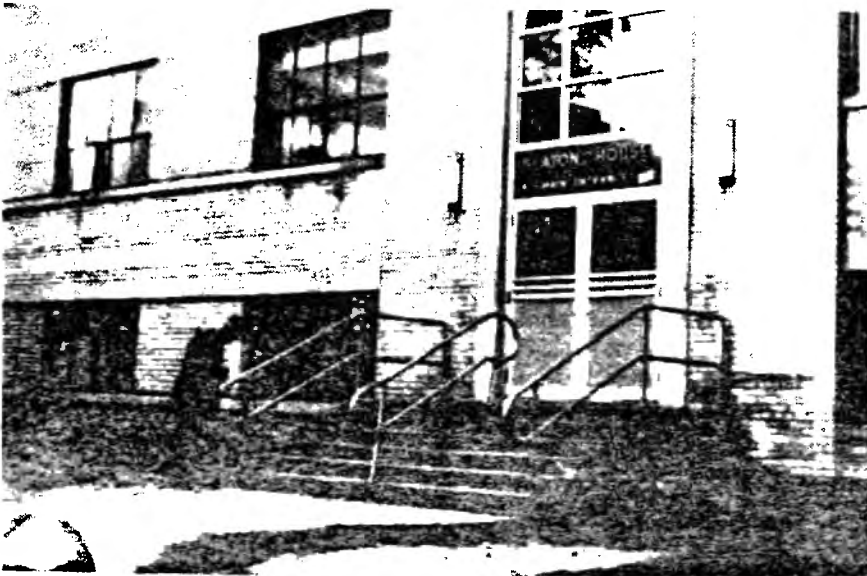
1. SKID ROW INSTITUTIONS



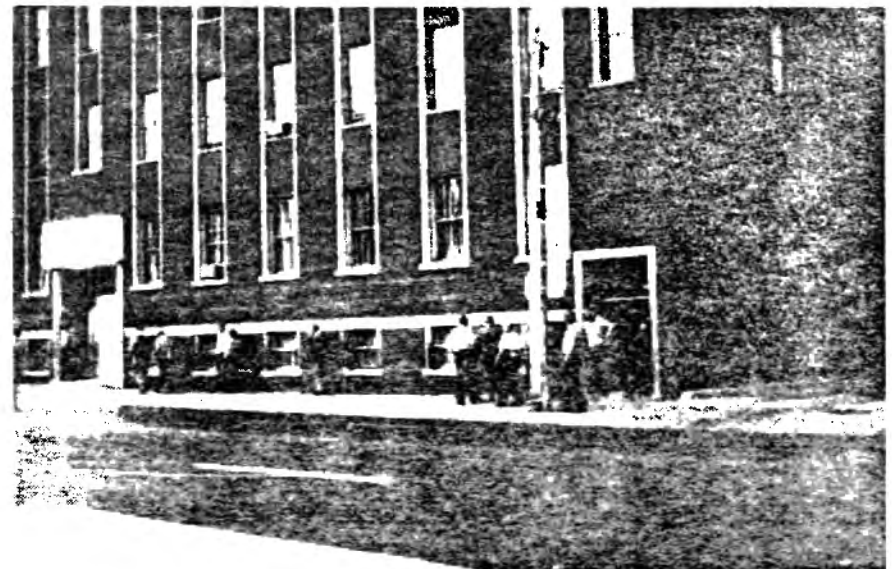
HARBOUR LIGHT



SCOTT MISSION



SEATON HOUSE



THE SALVATION ARMY MEN'S HOSTEL

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TABLE 2: APPROXIMATE HOSTEL CAPACITIES (WINTER 1976-77)

Hostel	Type of Accommodation			Total
	Permanent	Semi-Permanent	"Transient"	
Fred Victor Mission	65		120	185
Good Shepherd Refuge			40	40
Salvation Army	48	150	200	398
Toronto Men's Hostel/ Seaton House	60	120	200	380
TOTAL	153	270	560	983

SOURCE: C.T.P.B.

While most of the church-operated hostels require payment, if the individual can afford it, and are selective on who is eligible for assistance, Toronto Men's Hostel assumes the role of "agency of last resort". As a public institution, it provides free accommodation and has few restrictions on eligibility. This past winter, it increased its capacity to 200. In addition, sufficient mattresses are available to deal with an overflow. A "drunk tank", for intoxicated men, was used less in 1976-77 than in 1975-76.

One significant trend affecting hostel use is the increasing number of men becoming regular users of what was originally intended to be temporary accommodation. For example, over the last year, Fred Victor Mission has provided (at least one night's) accommodation to a total of only 681 different individuals. As this hostel is operating at full capacity, this works out to an average stay of about 2.5 months. Hostel operators agree that a substantial number of skid row men are increasingly becoming dependent on skid row institutions for all their needs.

6.2 Flophouses

Flophouses are private dwellings where sleeping accommodations are provided on a nightly basis on beds or cots in rooms of multiple occupancy. While a 1973 survey of the South of Carlton area estimated a total of 500 flophouse beds renting for about \$1.25, current information puts the number of flophouse beds at 300 in 18

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houses renting from \$2.00 a night. Therefore, while the number of flophouse beds seems to have declined over the last few years, they still represent a significant source of accommodation for the skid row population, particularly since they clearly serve a particular need.

The largest owner of flophouses is currently operating 13 houses, with about 250 beds. A check of the population in these houses on one night in early May found about 200 men in residence. About 25% of them were 35 and under, 45% between 36 and 50, and 30% over 50 years of age.

The flophouses, in fact, provide a variety of accommodation and rates. The accommodation offered includes cots in dormitories, semi-private rooms and private rooms. Rates run from \$2.00 a night in a dormitory to \$78.00 a month for a single room.

The tenants exhibited various degrees of residential stability: about 20% of the men had been there less than one month; approximately 30% had been there from one to six months, over 40% had been tenants for longer than six months; and several men had been tenants for as long as ten years. However, nearly one-half of the occupants paid by the night.

Pensions, welfare and disability benefit, and casual labour and unemployment insurance benefits were mentioned about equally as their primary source of income.

The decrease in the number of flophouse beds in the Eastern Downtown Area appears to be the result of two related trends. First, redevelopment has brought about the demolition or renovation of a number of flophouses. Also, the whitepainting activity in the Don District and Cabbagetown has changed the social composition of these neighbourhoods. As a result, there has been a decrease in the tolerance afforded the skid row population; middle class sensibilities seem particularly disturbed by the presence of flophouse accommodation.

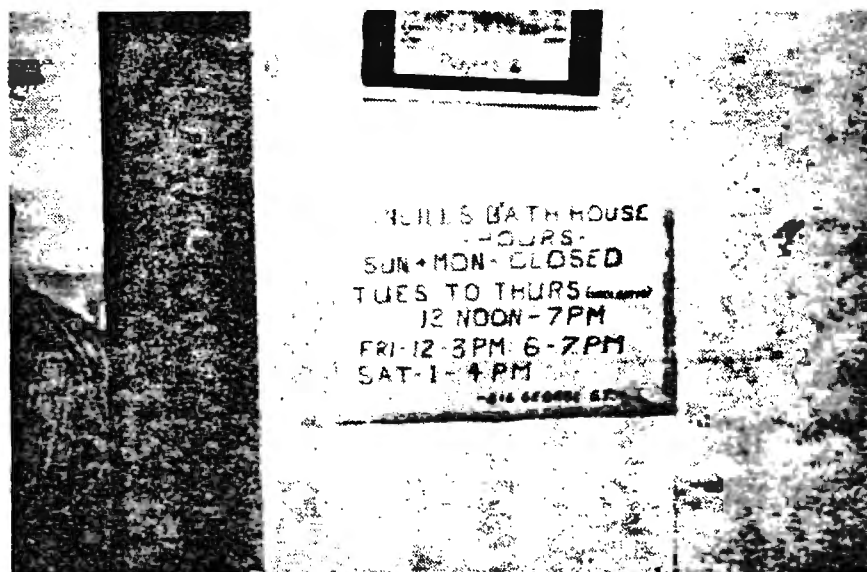
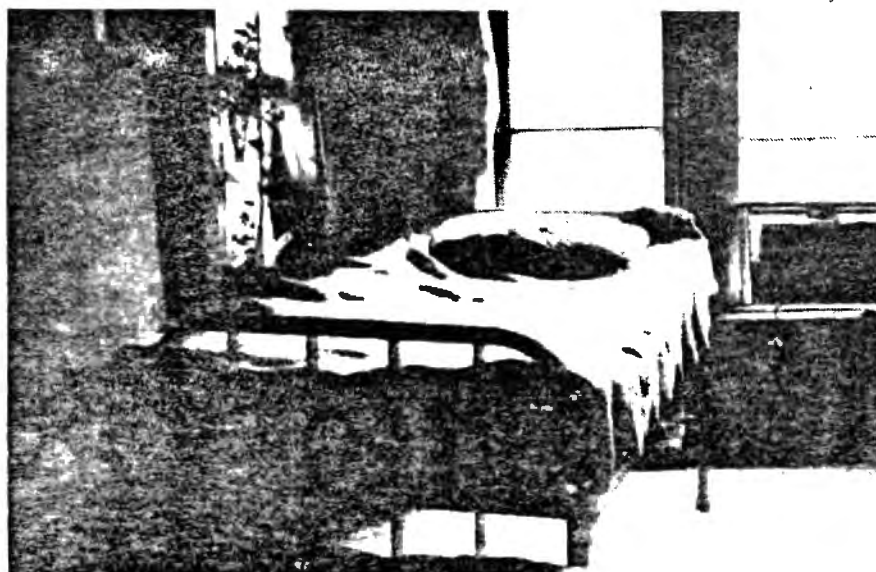
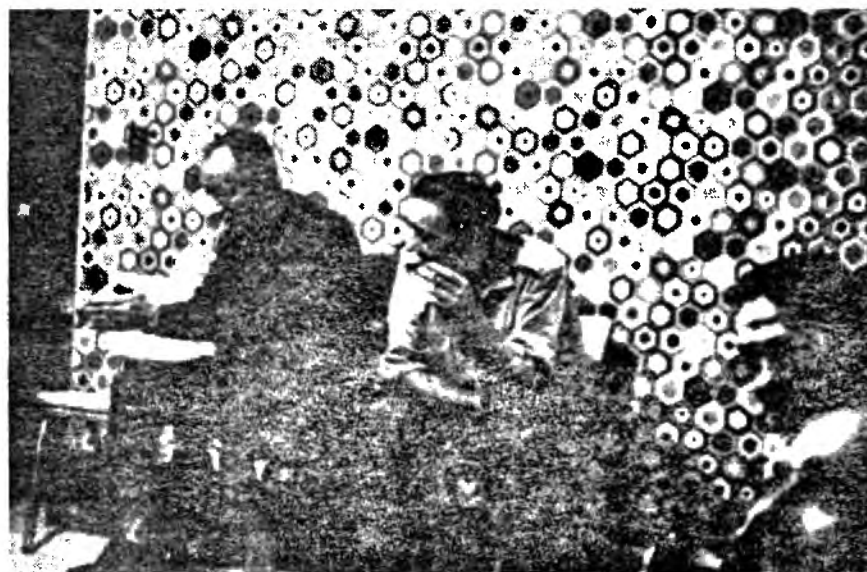
Second, over the last few years, in particular, there has been a growing concern over the conditions of residential properties. The presence of filthy and substandard conditions posing serious health and fire hazards has prompted the City to license certain types of lodgings and more actively and stringently enforce the Building By-laws.

The unique problems associated with the provision of adequate housing for the City's skid row population have been discussed in a number of reports: two of them being South of Carlton Report on

2. THE FLOPHOUSE (OUTSIDE)



3. THE FLOPHOUSE (INSIDE)



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Rooming Houses, and Housing Low Income Single People. However, the function of the flophouse has not been adequately examined. The City of Toronto Rooming House By-law Study Report of May, 1974, produced by Peat, Marwick and Partners, recognized this problem:

While there is considerable correlation between the problems of rooming houses and the problem of the "hard-to-house", a clear distinction should be made between the two subjects when devising regulatory policies and programs. ... This (study) recommends a program affecting rooming houses, but it has not accomplished the research necessary to also recommend standards, by-laws and enforcement procedures affecting the conditions and operations of flophouses. It is the view of many City officials that the conditions and operations in flophouses should be investigated with a view of revising the standard and means of code enforcement affecting them (5).

Similar concerns were also voiced in the Skid Row Sub-Committee Report of March 1974:

One of the main problems in the regulation of housing standards in rooming houses and flophouses has been the general lack of recognition both in the by-law and in the administration of this by-law, of the specialized function served by these types of dwellings (6).

The flophouse, in fact, serves a unique housing function. The physical condition of the existing flophouses is universally poor. Therefore, from a quality standpoint, this type of housing is minimal even if health and building code regulations are met. However, it does provide a variety of accommodation types at low rents. And, from a social perspective, it provides an environment which tolerates a wider range of behaviour than is available in other legitimate sleeping arrangements.

By accepting all but the most destructive behaviour, such as vandalism and fighting, the flophouses provide shelter for the drunk, the sick and the emotionally disturbed. While there is no ban on alcohol in the flops, its consumption is controlled or tolerated to the degree that it is not allowed to seriously

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disrupt the operation of the house. Therefore, the flophouse fills an accommodation niche between the rooming house, which requires a regular income and often imposes both implicit and explicit restrictions on drinking and other behaviour, and the hostels, which exercise explicit control over the men: they must check in and out at particular hours; no drinking is allowed on the premises, etc.

6.3 Rooming Houses

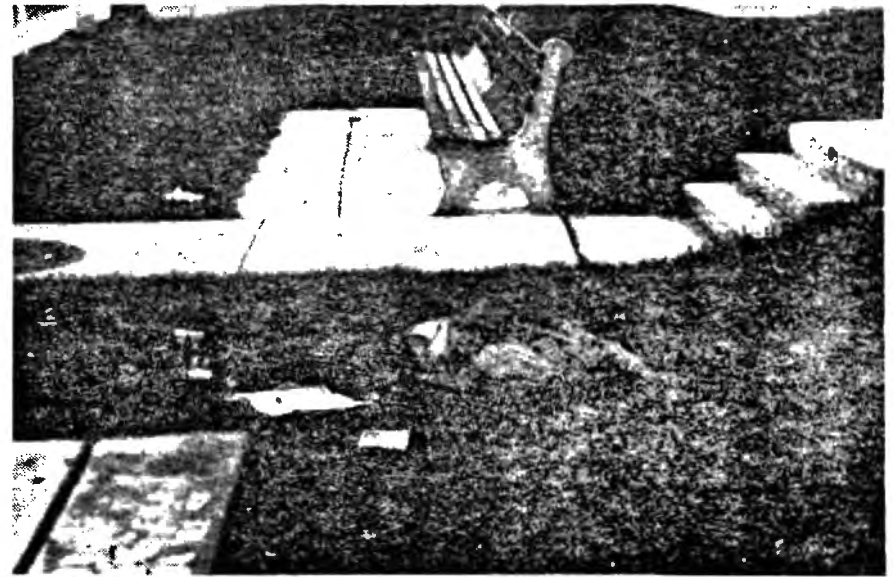
The most common type of residential accommodation for the skid row or "hard-to-house" population, both in terms of availability and affordability, is the rooming house. Although a rooming house is generally defined as any dwelling wherein rooms are individually rented on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, the majority of skid row individuals would most likely be found in large, absentee-owned, rooming houses with four or more rooms.

In many cases, operators of the rooming houses lease them or are commissioned to operate them for a percent of the revenue. Because of their concern with the magnitude of that revenue, they are normally less inclined to reinvest revenue profits in capital improvements and maintenance. Also, they are more likely to be concerned with minimizing vacancy and therefore maximizing revenue. Consequently, these operators will be more inclined to accept less dependable skid row tenants who will generally have lower expectations of obtaining quality accommodation (7).

This segregation of roomers by type and size of rooming house and location within the City is, therefore, due to what appears to be a natural "self-selection" process among tenants and operators and the fact that many large, old houses suitable for conversion to rooming houses are located in areas close to the City centre. The more independent, stable and therefore lower risk tenants tend to gravitate to rooming houses which are better maintained by more concerned operators and which are most likely to be in the more stable residential neighbourhoods.

The physical deterioration of much of the City's rooming house stock in the primary skid row area, because of age, neglect and vandalism, became a matter of increasing public concern in the early 1970's. The increase in the number of fires and fire-related deaths over the period 1969 to 1973 was dramatic evidence that immediate action was required. For example, not only did deaths in rooming houses fires account for an average of 35.8% of all fire-related deaths in the City over this five-year period, but rooming house fires, as a percentage of all fires, had increased from 4.2% to 6.2% over this same time period.

4. ELSEWHERE ON THE 'ROW'



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In 1974, as part of a policy to remedy this trend, Council adopted Lodging House By-law 412-74 to license certain types of rooming house operators. The implementation of this by-law, as well as a more vigorous enforcement of the amended Housing By-law 73-68 was undertaken by the Development Department.

The effects on the supply of rooms of this ongoing program to upgrade the quality of the City's rooming house stock have not been clear although evidence suggests an overall decline in rooming house occupancy. Given the fact that many of the buildings are old and run down -- particularly those which are most likely to provide accommodation for the skid row roomer -- it is probable that by-law enforcement may be having the direct effect of reducing the supply of rooming accommodation in converted dwellings. In fact, Peat, Marwick and Partners suggested, in a 1974 report commissioned by the Development Department, that:

"... rooming house vacancy levels are declining, as the supply of rooming house units in the City declines due to assemblies, effects of the recent provincial speculation tax and the reduction in the general profitability of owning and operating rooming house properties" (7).

They went on to suggest that:

"... the extent to which housing standards of the City are further enforced will certainly have a negative impact on the supply of rooming house units accommodating hard-to-house" (8).

The actual change, if any, in the number of rooms for rent in the City is difficult to estimate. A complete inventory of rooming houses did not exist a few years ago so that, even if such a task were undertaken now, there would be no basis for comparison. However, using the information at its disposal, the Development Department states that, while the number of properties in which occupancy has been reduced through enforcement of Lodging House By-law 412-74 was 451 for the period February 1974 to March 1975, inclusive, this figure is of doubtful accuracy because many properties where owners had declared a tenancy reduction were found, on reinspection, to have increased again.

The Landlord and Tenant Act has also been mentioned, mainly by rooming house operators, as a factor in determining the supply of

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rooming houses. In order to protect the rights of tenants, it provides for an eviction process which may take up to three months -- often denying the landlord the rent for this period. How important this may be in affecting the supply of rooms, particularly for the "hard-to-house" is open to conjecture.

The present situation, according to information from the Open Door Registry Service operated by All Saints Church on Dundas Street East, is that there is a strong demand for rooms in the Eastern Downtown Area. However, the supply appears to be keeping up with the demand although the prices have risen. The minimum rent for a light housekeeping room (where some food preparation is allowed) is between \$25 and \$30 a week.

In summary, then, rooming house accommodation represents the most complex and least understood component of skid row housing. This is mainly due to the fact that rooming houses are not as easy to identify and study as hostels or, for that matter, flophouses. They are numerous (Development Department records up to August, 1976, indicate that 1,583 lodging houses were absentee-owned -- this representing 70% of the total rooming houses inspected), vary in quality, size and location, and are used by a wide variety of people -- not just skid row individuals. There appears to be, however, evidence of a gradual erosion of that segment of rooming house stock which provides accommodation for the hard-to-house.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- a) In terms of such factors as age, employment status, type of accommodation, residential mobility and location, and drinking behaviour, the skid row population is much more diverse than is generally realized. Poverty and lack of family ties, however, characterize skid row individuals.
- b) Although the social, physical and functional character of the traditional, centrally located, skid row area has changed, it continues to be the focus of the City's disaffiliated population. This is due to two main factors: its historic significance and familiarity to many of the men; and, the continued concentration of a variety of public and privately operated skid row services.
- c) There are approximately 8 to 10 thousand men in the City who can be classified as skid row types. About half manifest the more visible behaviour and characteristics of the skid row lifestyle while the other half may be more accurately described as marginal or potential skid row individuals.

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- d) Two factors are critical in projecting the size and character of the skid row population over the next several years. One is the aging and eventual dying-off of the many men who drifted on to skid row in the year following World War II. The other is the continued recruitment of younger men to the skid row lifestyle. Current impressions suggest that, with a continuation of the economic recession, the skid row population could increase because of the enculturation of a significant number of young, unemployed men is occurring more rapidly than deaths in the older, hard-core group.
- e) There is currently a sufficient supply of basic shelter for the skid row population although much of it could be considered inadequate in both a social and physical sense. However, if present trends continue and the physical and social environment of skid rowers continues to shrink in the Downtown, the expansion and/or development of a number of smaller skid rows in various locations in the City is likely to occur.
- f) An increasing number of skid row men are becoming dependent on skid row institutions for all their needs. This change in behaviour is partly attributable to a number of factors: the aging of the population; the greater availability of social welfare resources, particularly for supportive rather than prevention and rehabilitative programs; the lack of jobs; and the decrease in the supply of inexpensive accommodation provided by the private sector.

8. POLICY DIRECTIONS

For the most part, until quite recently, skid row has been largely ignored by the City. While some government and church agencies have worked to alleviate the suffering endemic to the phenomenon, the problem persists. Today, the rapid pace of redevelopment in the traditional skid row area is threatening the precarious position of the economically poor, socially disaffiliated and otherwise marginal members of the community. It is therefore desirable, if not essential, that the City now provide the leadership needed to deal with skid row problems.

While the ideal goal should continue to be the elimination of the causes of skid row, the immediate response should have a more limited objective: the development of a variety of programmes designed to meet the needs of skid row and potential skid row individuals and assist them in improving the quality of their lives.

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8.1 Skid Row Services and Housing

Three general categories of action are necessary to achieve this objective: (1) preventive; (2) supportive and caretaking; and (3) treatment/rehabilitative. Each of these will have a service and housing component; the type and relative emphasis of which will be determined by the specific needs of the target groups as well as the programme objectives.

(1) Preventive Action

It is particularly important to establish an effective and comprehensive prevention programme. The continued enculturation of young men into a skid row lifestyle makes it imperative to first identify those who are vulnerable and then take appropriate action, using the existing social service network when possible, to prevent their drift into the ranks of the chronic skid row population by reintegrating them into the mainstream of society. This requires:

(a) The Creation of a Skid Row Prevention Centre

Because the success of any prevention programme will depend on the early identification of those alienated young men who have begun to drift into skid row, it is necessary that this new centre work in close co-operation with a number of agencies which are likely to have some contact with this type of individual. These would include: Metro Police, the judicial system, the schools, Metro Social Services, as well as the skid row agencies.

The centre's role would include an aggressive outreach programme, the identification of problems, the referral of individuals to appropriate community agencies and, most important, an effective follow-up approach.

It is important that the staff be carefully chosen and trained workers who would have the skills necessary to establish and maintain relationships with these young men. Personal suitability, rather than professional qualifications, should head the selection criteria for these positions.

(2) Support and Caretaking Action

Rehabilitation, for many skid row men, through formally structured treatment programmes, is not a realistic goal. Programmes designed to "rehabilitate" men who are "burnt out", too old or disabled for regular employment, have no families or friends to

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rejoin, or non-skid row social ties to re-establish - who, in short, are too entrenched in a skid row lifestyle - are not realistic. Therefore, the primary goal of a support and caretaking approach to the problem of skid row men should be an immediate improvement in their living conditions and health. However, all programmes should be structured so as to encourage a positive change in behaviour; i.e. greater independence over the long term. In addition, there should always be the opportunity, for those men who wish, to participate in therapeutically-oriented treatment programmes.

This approach would include:

(a) The Establishment of Store-Front "Emergency" Centres

Several small centres in areas with a substantial skid row population would be designed primarily to meet the immediate needs of the hard-core skid rower. First aid, companionship, snacks, a safe place to sober up or flop would be examples of the types of services offered on a 24-hour-a-day basis. If possible, they would be operated by rehabilitated skid row individuals rather than by a professional staff.

While their primary function would be the ^{alleviation?} alienation of some of the acute "hurt" experienced by the men, they would also serve as a means of gaining their confidence, thereby increasing the likelihood of their using other services available to them in the City.

(b) The Encouragement of a Workers' Co-Operative

Work, when it is available, is a more significant source of income for many skid rowers than is commonly thought. Although many men do not want or are not capable of full-time or permanent employment, the market in temporary labour should be seen as an important and healthy facet of an otherwise non-productive lifestyle.

At present, most skid rowers who obtain casual labour do so through privately-operated employment agencies located in the Eastern Downtown Area. These agencies act as middle-men. As a consequence, the workers earn little more than the minimum wage. Also, because of transiency, lack of knowledge and hesitancy to pursue their rights, there is a tendency among the men to neglect to obtain all the benefits to which they are legally entitled; for example, holiday pay.

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The establishment, in the City, of a co-operatively-owned and operated casual labour agency may not only encourage self-sufficiency and self-respect, but could also provide higher wages for the men. In addition, it could provide the impetus for a more extensive co-operative effort among skid row individuals: housing co-ops, trades co-ops., etc.

At present, the closest example of such an enterprise in Toronto is the non-profit employment agency run by the United Church, 4-U Non-Profit Temporary Work Centre. Although this Toronto operation is experiencing financial problems, a skid row workers' co-operative in Winnipeg, Independent Co-Operative Enterprises Inc., is operating successfully (9). It is, therefore, recommended that the feasibility of the City assisting in the operation of such an enterprise be studied further.

(c) The Rationalization and Improvement of Existing Skid Row Accommodation

While skid row problems will not be solved simply by assuring that adequate accommodation is available for single displaced persons, it is important that the physical quality of housing for skid row men at least meet some set of minimum standards. Furthermore, and central to improving conditions for these men, is the recognition that housing must be considered as a social environment within which lies the possibility of meeting both the immediate and long-term needs of the skid row individual.

Due to the variety of needs and disabilities - physical, emotional and social - of the target population, a wide range of housing alternatives - types and locations - should be considered.

(1) Hostels

There will always be a need for temporary or short-term accommodation in the City. Men with few resources will continue to pass through the City in search of seasonal work or just travelling.

In addition, men with acute financial, family or emotional problems frequently require emergency shelter. This group requires special attention since a large proportion may be skid row candidates. Therefore, experienced staff should be attached to the hostels to identify those individuals and, if

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necessary, refer them to the "prevention centre" for assistance and "follow-up".

In short, the primary role of the hostels should be the provision of short-term and emergency accommodation, while identifying and helping those men who risk falling into the skid row lifestyle.

(11) Flophouses

Flophouses provide an important housing resource for a portion of the skid row population. They provide inexpensive accommodation, flexibility of tenure, the opportunity for social interaction, rudimentary meal service, and the freedom to consume alcohol on the premises.

The flophouse should be considered the most basic type of accommodation for those skid row men who wish to maintain their present lifestyle without losing their independence. Therefore, while the physical quality of the accommodation requires upgrading, it would be desirable to encourage the continuance of privately operated flophouses.

However, the continued existence of privately-owned and operated flophouses is in question. The pressure to sell these houses for renovations to meet middle-class housing needs will undoubtedly increase over the next few years. It may, therefore, be desirable for the City to purchase and renovate, to necessary standards, these properties, while leaving their day-to-day operation as flophouses as much as possible in the hands of independent operators.

This preference for the independent operations of flophouses is based on two major considerations. First, many flophouse residents do not wish to have any association with rehabilitation or treatment programmes and are suspicious of and, in many cases, hostile toward government and church-operated agencies. Secondly, there is a danger that, under direct government operation, a flophouse system could gradually adopt policies and an administrative structure which would tend to become more restrictive. For example, resident selection criteria may become so stringent that the very men

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for whom the accommodation is intended are denied residence.

By combining City ownership, renovation and maintenance with independent operation, it is possible that this unique type of accommodation can continue to meet the needs of many skid row men.

(iii)

Rooming Houses

Rooming houses are the most prevalent type of accommodation for skid row individuals. Because there is evidence to suggest that they are decreasing in number - particularly in the Eastern Downtown Area - the City should examine the feasibility of encouraging their continued operation, especially those which cater to the skid row tenant. If the private sector cannot provide an adequate supply of rooms, it may be desirable for the City Non-Profit Housing Corporation to expand its acquisition of rooming houses. In some cases, their operation may be given over to private organizations who offer an alternative to the hostel response to skid row housing problems.

Although the majority of skid row tenants do not require supervision, many can benefit from a more structured residential environment. Included in this group would be those suffering from physical and mental disabilities and some recovered alcoholics. For these individuals, a facility managed by a landlady or husband-wife team could provide a protected situation in which necessary services could be provided as they were needed. Such services might include meals, nursing visits, employment and counselling, etc. A number of these rooming houses could serve, in some respect, the role of "half-way" houses providing a supportive environment with the goal of making the individual completely self-sufficient. On the other hand, it should be recognized that many individuals will need continuing assistance and support.

A particularly large group for which this type of accommodation would be desirable is the skid row elderly. As noted previously, one characteristic of the City's skid row is the large number of elderly men in its population. In most cases, these men are

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older than their chronological ages would suggest because of their harsh lifestyles. Some are "burnt-out" alcoholics, while others remain heavy drinkers.

While they need many of the support and services required by the elderly, they do not fit into or want conventional senior citizen housing or activities. Many are attached to the skid row environment and feel comfortable there with the people and surroundings they know. As a consequence, they may appreciate and benefit from living in rooming houses designed and operated with their needs in mind and located in the Eastern Downtown Area.

(3) Treatment/Rehabilitative Action

The most recent large scale therapeutic response to the problems of skid row alcoholics has been the establishment of a detoxication centre system. An Addiction Research Foundation study of its operation in the City over the last six years found that:

Attitudes of current skid row alcoholics suggest that detoxication centres are seen primarily as drying-out and caretaking agencies rather than as gateways to rehabilitation. Detoxication centres do not appear to have played a significant role in changing the lifestyle of most people on skid row (10).

While the shortcomings of this particular public health approach to skid row alcoholics have become apparent, it is nonetheless essential that any comprehensive approach to skid row contain a therapeutic component to assist those who wish help in changing their lifestyle.

The two most important goals of treatment are: easy accessibility to those who can benefit from it, and more effective results. The achievement of these goals can be enhanced within the existing treatment system by several means.

- a) The detox centres should be operated in conjunction with both short and long-term treatment facilities rather than in isolation from such facilities;
- b) Because of the involvement of many agencies, with different treatment philosophies, it is advisable to develop an

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effective co-ordinating mechanism so that each agency will offer a unique type of service to those men most likely to benefit from it;

- c) In general, treatment programmes for skid row alcoholics have not demonstrated a high level of success (12). It is therefore advisable in planning and operating such programmes to build in the capacity for continuous review and evaluation to accommodate ever-changing needs and requirements.

(4) Financing Skid Row Programs

The main focus of the latter part of this paper has been to identify specific and substantive policy directions which could be pursued to alleviate the problems associated with skid row. However, basic to these or any other policies dealing with skid row, including existing programs, is the need for an adequate funding program. Funding of skid row programs may involve, directly or indirectly, several levels of government and other agencies. Reviewing funding arrangements and priorities, including the possibility of securing 'ear-marked grants', may be a worthwhile endeavour in itself, particularly with regard to the City's own role and priorities. In any event, the development of any of the preceding policy directions should necessarily be accompanied by an examination of possible funding arrangements which may be necessary to implement those policies.

Recommendations:

1. That City Council:

- a) endorse the concerns expressed in this report regarding the skid row population in the City of Toronto;
- b) establish a sub-committee consisting of members of Council, staff of the Planning Board and Housing Department, and other City departments involved with skid row problems to investigate alternative means for funding and implementing prevention, housing and rehabilitation programmes as outlined in the policy directions of this report. In addition, the Committee will convene meetings with other levels of government and private agencies inviting their co-operation and assistance in dealing with specific areas of concern.

- 2. That this report be distributed to those social agencies who are concerned with skid row problems and that these agencies be asked to comment - particularly on the policy direction

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outlined in Section 8.

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Commissioner of Planning.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Oki, G. and M. Morton, "The Chronic Drunkenness Offender - Education and Work", Substudy, Addiction Research Foundation, 1969.
2. See Annis, Helen, et.al., The Ontario Detoxication System, A.R.F.O., Toronto, 1976, for an elaboration of those conclusions.
3. Howe, B. & Hoichberg, S., Single Displaced Persons in Downtown Toronto, Fred Victor Mission, Toronto, 1972.
4. Bogue, D.J., Skid Row in American Cities, Chicago, 1963.
5. Peat, Marwick and Partners, City of Toronto Rooming House By-law Study, May, 1974, pp.1,2.
6. C.T.P.B., Skid Row Sub-Committee Report, March, 1974, p.5.
7. Peat, Marwick and Partners, City of Toronto Rooming House By-law Study, May 1974, p.13.
8. Peat, Marwick and Partners, City of Toronto Rooming House By-law Impact Study, October, 1974, pp.18-19.
9. See Appendices A & B for an outline of the Aims and Purposes of this co-op. and the Manager's Report for 1976, respectively.
10. Annis, H. et al, The Ontario Detoxication System, A.R.F.O., Toronto, 1976, p.25.
11. See Wiseman, Jacqueline P., Stations of the Lost, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970, for a detailed study of treatment of skid row alcoholics.

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APPENDIX A

INDEPENDENT CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISES INC.
WINNEPEG

AIMS AND PURPOSES

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the aims of Independent Co-Operative Enterprises would be to relate a short history of its development.

During the summer of 1970, a group of concerned people from both inside and outside of the area were involved in a locally based action-research project. From this research, three clear-cut issues arose:

- a) inadequate casual labour services;
- b) a need for additional hostel facilities for transient single men; and
- c) a lack of recreational facilities.

Our aim then became to resolve these three issues. After lengthy discussion, it was decided that the best way to get at these issues was to establish a co-operatively owned and operated casual labour agency. In that the agency would generate its own funds, it would serve as an economic base through which we could initiate and develop further enterprises and badly needed services (e.g. the hostel and recreation centre).

Because Independent Co-op operates on democratic principles, it cannot at this point in time commit itself to working on any specific issues. A co-operative system implies a certain responsibility in terms of meeting the felt needs of its members. As needs change so does the aim of the co-operative. For example, a recent issue is that of purchasing income tax returns. This could be done on a non-profit basis and would be consistent with our aims. Where co-operation exists, exploitation and monopoly cannot.

Our purposes as set out in our letters patent are:

- a) to locate and/or create employment for its members;
- b) to carry on any business or render any service which can be conveniently carried on or rendered in connection with the above;

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- c) to acquire by purchase, lease, or otherwise and to sell or otherwise dispose of lands, buildings, equipment and facilities necessary or convenient in carrying out the above objectives.

THE OPERATION

The function of I.C.E. has two facets:

- a) a job finding service for its members;
- b) a book-keeping service for its clients.

The operating margin covers:

- a) payroll expenses (UIC, CPP, Vacation Pay);
- b) operating expenses (rent, phone, etc.);
- c) staff salaries;
- d) insurance;
- e) bonding;
- f) interest;
- g) contributions to reserve fund.

For instance, a job which would ordinarily pay \$1.75 will cost a prospective employer approximately \$2.25.

There are several reasons why industry is willing to pay this extra fee:

- a) Many companies whose head offices are located in another city do not have payroll facilities in the local branch offices.
- b) Some companies are attracted by the idea of maintaining a flexible labour factor.
- c) The co-operative member-employees are equal partners in the business so it can be safely assumed that this will be reflected in his work.

The management and staff are hired by the co-op to execute the policies and programs which are handed down by the board of directors. This board in turn is elected by and from the

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membership at large. Although the policies of the co-operative may change from time to time, they will be geared not to profit as is common to private companies but to the changing needs of its members.

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APPENDIX B

INDEPENDENT CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISES INC.
WINNIPEG

MANAGER'S REPORT

1976 has been the best year ever for Independent Co-Op. A decrease in the profit margin to 18% still left us with over \$5,000 to use in case of any problems we may have in the year to come.

Since the first 6 months of 1976 left us in a very good financial position, we were able to increase our wages to the workers in September to \$3.25 and \$3.35 per hour. A corresponding increase to companies caused no ill effects since the minimum wage had gone up at the same time and I.C.E. still offers the lowest rate in casual labour.

1976 showed a tremendous growth in hours over 1975. We increased from 72,234 hours in 1975 to 82,450 hours in 1976, a gain of 10,216 hours. Such results can only come from work well done by both the workers and the staff.

The President of the Board has already commented on the problems I.C.E. has had as a tenant in St. Andrew's Place. I would like to add my thanks to the workers for doing everything in their power to make I.C.E. a welcome and supporting member of the building. We have access to many facilities by being in the building, and as the year progressed our members began making considerable use of the Health Action Centre, Thrift Shop, and the Buyers' Club. As the other tenants of the building become more familiar with us, they find that we are seldom to blame for problems within the building.

In keeping with the mandate originally set out for I.C.E., several new areas for growth have been considered in the past year. A Drop-In Centre was started in the early spring to give the workers somewhere to play cards and visit together. Dan Bilcowski and Steve Borowski put a lot of time and effort into the Drop-In Centre, and Bill Chegwin very kindly made a TV available. Attendance at the Drop-In Centre was less than expected, partly because the lovely spring weather tempted people outside. More interest by the members would be necessary to reconsider the need for a Drop-In Centre.

Housing was also considered. Money is available from CMHC and MHRC for single-person dwellings. There is a definite need within

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the Co-Op for adequate housing, but it was decided to monitor the experience with Jack's Hotel before the Co-Op commits itself in this area.

Bill Chegwin has already mentioned the AA discussion meetings being held on Friday evenings at St. Andrew's. The Co-Op owes Bill a debt of gratitude for giving up his Friday evenings to get the group on its feet.

I.C.E. has been a member of a group of people across Canada interested in the problems of the urban core -- Urban Core Support Network. A conference of this group will be held in Winnipeg in May. I.C.E. will be used as an example of one solution to the problem of day to day jobs for urban core residents. Several other attempts have been made in other cities but I.C.E. has has the most success -- thanks to the efforts of workers and staff.

We will, of course, continue our search for new areas of development within the Co-Op. And there is a possibility that we may be given money by the Government of Manitoba to hire someone to help us with this search.

As you know, the first 3 months of 1977 have been reflecting the highest ever unemployment rate in Canada. The Co-Op has lost no contracts in this period, but companies that use us regularly are using far fewer men than they did at the same time last year. We must, therefore, take great care to avoid losing the ground gained in the past three years.

I.C.E. has many people to thank for their support and help in 1976.

Since this is a co-operative, the members have the greatest part to play in making I.C.E. a success. They elected a very responsible Board to act for them in making the decisions necessary to run I.C.E. The Board received assistance from the Advisory Board on matters that required extra help. Both the Board and the Advisors give their time to us free of charge and it is a tremendous duty to take on with no thought of reward other than the Co-Op's success.

The Department of Co-Op Development and Co-Operative Credit Society of Manitoba have once again given their invaluable assistance to financial matters, personnel procedures, and legal problems.

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I would like to give my personal thanks to the staff for extending themselves far beyond the requirements of their jobs. Their commitment to the Co-Op is evident in the results for 1976.

Thank you to the members for a job well done.